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NEWS - NATION AND WORLD

Friday, Nov. 06, 2009

Coast Guard chief hails Calif. crash victims

The Associated Press

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Thousands of family members, friends and colleagues said farewell Friday to seven Coast Guard members who died when their plane collided with a Marine helicopter off the San Diego coast.

"No ceremony is as difficult as this one, at this place, at this time," Adm. Thad Allen, the Coast Guard commandant, said at a memorial service at Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento, where the crew was based.

The Coast Guard members were on a C-130 plane searching for a missing boater when the aircraft collided Oct. 29 with a Marine AH-1W Super Cobra helicopter on a training exercise. The two Marines in the helicopter also died.

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A joint Marine-Coast Guard board is investigating the cause of the crash.

Capt. J.J. O'Connor, commanding officer of Air Station Sacramento, eulogized the Coast Guard members as smart, caring people who loved to fly.

Lt. Cmdr. Che J. Barnes, commander of the crew, was a wonderful teacher who made colleagues laugh, O'Connor said.

He said Lt. Adam W. Bryant, the co-pilot, loved football and fishing and liked to joke.

Petty Officer Monica L. Beacham volunteered time in the community. Petty Officer Jason S. Moletzky was new to Sacramento but fit in immediately and always wore a smile.

Other Coast Guard members who died were Chief Petty Officer John Seidman, Petty Officer Carl. P. Grigonis and Petty Officer Danny R. Kreder II.

SIMILAR STORIES:

- Search for Calif. crash survivors now recovery
- Coast Guard identifies 9 missing in midair crash
- Coast Guard plans service for plane crash victims
- Nine feared dead in crash
- Calif. searchers seek survivors after midair crash

